REPORT ON THE SIXTY-MINUTE CLASS PERIOD IN THE WISCONSIN HIGH SCHOOL

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In arranging the schedule of hours for classes in the Wisconsin High School it was found expedient to follow the university schedule of hours in order to accommodate intending teachers in education and training courses. One of the immediate administrative problems is the management of the school in a manner that will enable university students to distribute their time and energy economically between the practical work of the school and other courses in the university. Accordingly the sixty-minute period has been adopted for all classes in the Wisconsin High School, including manual-training and laboratory work. The school day begins at eight o'clock, with four class periods in the forenoon and three in the afternoon, beginning at 12:30 and closing at 3:30. Pupils are expected to be in school five hours a day. The net teaching time for each period is fifty minutes. Ten minutes are allowed for intermission between class periods. The same treatment obtains throughout the six years of the school. Pupils in the lowest classes sixth and fifth, corresponding roughly to the seventh and eighth grades, are given the same schedule of hours.

This plan for the high school increases materially the net teaching time. The usual practice is to allow forty-five minutes gross for each class period, with three to five minutes intermission. A gain of ten minutes in teaching time for each non-laboratory subject means a gain of 25 per cent in teaching time. A school year of 180 days may be increased approximately forty-five days in actual teaching time in non-laboratory subjects.

The ten-minute intermission is not given over entirely to visiting among pupils. The teachers utilize this period for conferences with pupils and in further preparation for subsequent work. In

laboratory subjects from six to eight minutes may be gained at each end of the period, thereby giving more than a full hour (sixty minutes) to these subjects. Pupils are quick to respond to suggestions in making preparation during intermissions for the various activities of the laboratory courses.

There has developed no adverse criticism upon the longer period for instructional purposes. Even in laboratory courses it is found that the net time for the week is equivalent to, if not in excess of, the time allotted under the usual plan of assigning the "double consecutive period," two days a week for laboratory work. Approximately five sixty-minute periods (300 minutes) each week are given to laboratory courses. With the forty-minute period and two "double consecutive periods" the net time is about 280 minutes a week. In science there are types of experimental work requiring a longer consecutive time allotment than is provided in the single-hour schedule. These demands may be met at odd times. On the other hand, by far the largest number of experiments can be managed in the single period of fifty minutes (with a possible sixty minutes by utilizing a part of the time allotted to intermissions).

Moreover, subjects of a laboratory character are being administered in a way that requires a definite amount of outside work, such as writing of notes in science and the reading of certain technical literature in manual-training courses and domestic science. The advantages of laboratory work are being incorporated in the teaching of academic subjects as a result of the longer class period. *Directed study* is given special emphasis under the supervision of teachers who are responsible for results in their own courses. A variety of exercises is worked out in the class hour. One of the aims is to teach pupils how to study. The character of the home work is materially modified, as are the activities of the hour.

The home task may be varied in terms of individual needs and accomplishment. The longer teaching period enables the teacher to discover more accurately the status of pupils and provides opportunity to render assistance to the slower pupils without neglecting the more competent.

The single-hour schedule for all courses simplifies the problems of program-making. The "double consecutive period" for

laboratory subjects and manual training imposes serious limitations upon the development of optional subjects in the high school on account of the necessary blocking of two class hours for one subject.

COMMENTS BY TEACHERS IN THE SCHOOL

I have not noticed that the pupils give any evidence of becoming unduly wearied by the somewhat longer period of recitation. I believe that there is particular advantage to us in having the longer recitation because of the opportunity it gives us for using the university students in the conduct of the recitation. In other words, the assistance of the university students unquestionably takes some time which rightfully belongs to the class. The additional ten minutes probably covers that extra time, in the long run.

W. W. HART (Mathematics)

To my mind the present arrangement of the recitation period is an ideal one for these reasons: (1) The ten-minute intermission makes possible a satisfactory handling of library books. (2) It allows time for brief conferences. (3) It affords the necessary relaxation. (4) The fifty minutes allowed for work make possible a good degree of schoolroom study. In the fifth and sixth classes that is about all the profitable study that is done and even in the Freshman class much confusion and error is avoided by this supervised study. (5) I have never yet found the recitation period too long; frequently it seems too short.

MAUD HAMILTON (History)

I consider the fifty-minute period one of the most satisfactory features of the school and I should be very sorry to see it cut down in any way. The primary advantage lies in the fact that the teacher has time to explain thoroughly the work of the next day—perhaps even to start upon it. The attentive pupil therefore has no excuse for not knowing how to prepare the next lesson. Another strong point in its favor is that there is time for questions as the lesson goes on and a chance for a far better understanding on the part of the pupil than would otherwise be possible.

I look upon the period as it is now arranged as a chance to do *more effectively* what the average good high school has been trying to do with a shorter time for recitation, rather than as an opportunity to add to the extent of the subject-matter. Latin teaching has suffered from superficial treatment due to an attempt to cover too much ground in the time given to the subject.

FRANCES E. SABIN (Latin)

The fifty-minute period is desirable because it is long enough to be divided into two parts, one of which can be utilized for teaching new subjects and the other for supervised work at the seats or board—a most desirable arrangement.

ELIZABETH MCCONNELL (Mathematics)

Advantages: 1) Gives an opportunity for frequent short written quizzes, special reports, and brief discussions of general difficulties. 2) For laboratory sections the ten-minute intermission makes possible the completing of certain work which cannot be ended abruptly.

Disadvantage: Five fifty-minute periods are not equivalent to seven forty-minute periods where two are double periods for laboratory work. This is especially true since there will be a loss of forty minutes per week or more for some classes, on account of singing and other general activities.

It is my personal opinion that we ought to look forward to the time when science courses as well as other courses will be scheduled for three or four hours per week between 8:00 and 1:30 or 2:30, and when all laboratory courses in whatever subject will be run distinctly as such from 1:30 to 4:30 P.M. in regular two-hour periods.

W. F. ROECKER (Science)

This schedule has four effects at once noticeable as bearing directly on the teacher. With the longer period giving an opportunity for more flexibility in class work, he can quickly secure thorough knowledge of his pupils as workers. He can also plan and carry out a course not only thorough in fundamentals but vitalized by enlivening details and correlations. He thus has better opportunities than in short periods to mold his classes into effective working bodies. The ten-minute interval gives him opportunity for a word here and there to a pupil while the need is fresh; it enables him to shift from the standpoint of one class to that of another without a hard jolt; and it refreshes him as it does the pupils.

J. L. C. BROOKINS (English)

The ten-minute intermission between recitations is of greater value to the teacher than to the pupil. (1) It allows time to get material ready for the next class. (2) It does away with the habit of taking the last minutes to explain something or do something after time, in the time that belongs to the next recitation (this has always been most annoying on account of the tardiness of pupils). (3) It gives the pupils an opportunity to relax in both mind and body and this is necessary in the case of the younger pupils. (4) Ten minutes is not long enough for pupils to settle down to do anything. All the older pupils are ready and anxious to begin the recitation long before the bell rings.

FRANCES K. BURR (German)

I feel that the present time schedule is an excellent one. For my work in English IV and III, where supervised study is so essential a part of class work, a fifty-minute period is never too long. A longer period might be too much of a physical strain for the pupils, particularly the younger ones.

MARGARET SKINNER (English)

I believe that the longer period also better meets the needs of the so-called laboratory science subjects. Too much emphasis has been placed on formalism in science courses in the high school. The notion that laboratory work must be set aside as separate and distinct from the other work has resulted in much waste of time and good, honest effort, and in deadening of spontaneity. The question is not, "How much time shall be given to laboratory work and how much to the recitation?" but rather, "How much time shall be given to biology, elementary science, etc.?" I believe that the laboratory work and the other part of the recitation should be so closely interwoven, one supplementing the other, that neither the pupil nor the teacher is conscious of sharp distinctions between these two general types of science teaching. Just as soon as we allow the two to become distinctly separate there is a formal gap which it is difficult to bridge.

KATHARINE SCHLADWEILER (Science)